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Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 20 April 2012 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you that the situation of Palestinian political prisoners illegally imprisoned and detained by Israel, the occupying Power, continues to be grave, and the already deplorable conditions in which they are being held continue to deteriorate, owing to escalating Israeli violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

On 17 April 2012, the day observed by the Palestinian people as "Prisoners' Day" in solidarity with thousands upon thousands of Palestinians held captive by Israel, more than 1,600 Palestinian prisoners and detainees began an open-ended hunger strike to protest against the inhumane, oppressive measures by the occupying Power that continue to deprive them of their basic human rights and to threaten their well-being, safety and lives. The 1,600 prisoners joined several Palestinian prisoners who have already been on prolonged hunger strike in protest of the illegal Israeli practice of administrative detention, by which the occupying Power continues to hold hundreds of Palestinians without charge or trial. Some of those detainees have now been on hunger strike for over 50 days, while others for over a month's time, and are in extremely fragile health. They include Thaer Halahla, Bilal Diab, Hassan Safadi, Omar Abu Shlal, Ahmed Sakar and others.

At this time, we must once again draw the international community's attention to the many oppressive measures and forms of physical and psychological abuse to which Palestinian prisoners and detainees are subjected by the occupying Power. This includes forcing them to live in unsanitary and unhygienic conditions; depriving them of their right to education and health care; denial of family visits; denial of access to legal help; solitary confinement; forced interrogations; humiliation; threats to themselves or their family members; and sleep deprivation, shackling to chairs and beds and forcing them to remain in painful, stress positions for long periods and other forms of torture. The hunger strikers are bravely aiming to call attention to all of these illegal, abusive Israeli practices along with the illegal

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practice of administrative detention and to urge the international community to take action to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease these deplorable practices and to release the thousands of Palestinian civilians, including children, women and elected officials, that it is inhumanely holding in captivity in its prisons and detention centres, and to whose ranks Israel continues to add every single day with its ongoing arrest campaign.

We hold Israel, the occupying Power, fully responsible for the lives and well-being of all the Palestinian prisoners who have resorted to this peaceful, non-violent measure of protest against Israel's extreme abuses, and call on the international community to act urgently to address this issue in accordance with international law, including humanitarian law, specifically article 76 of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, which clearly defines the rights of protected persons faced with detention by an occupying Power.

Today, I am also compelled to inform you of acts of violence and terrorism that continued to be perpetrated by Israeli occupying forces and illegal Israeli settlers this past week against Palestinian civilians as well as international peace activists, and measures taken against the properties and homes belonging to Palestinian civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

In this connection, on Wednesday, 18 April 2012, Rinad Qudeih, aged 27, was hit in the head by gunfire by the Israeli occupying forces in the southern part of the besieged Gaza Strip. Ms. Qudeih was working in her family's field when she was shot in the head and was taken to a nearby hospital to treat her wounds. Also on 18 April, Israeli occupying forces continued with their unlawful evictions of Palestinians from their homes in the Occupied West Bank. Palestinian families, numbering 13 people, in Occupied East Jerusalem were evicted from their homes in the neighbourhood of Beit Hanina, to clear the way for illegal Jewish settlers to take over to build a new illegal settlement there with more than 100 settlement units. This unlawful takeover is reminiscent of what took place in nearby Sheikh Jarrah in Occupied East Jerusalem, where a handful of heavily protected Jewish settlers now live in the predominantly Palestinian community as part of a larger policy aimed at forcing out as many Palestinians as possible from the City, advancing the ethnic cleansing of the City's indigenous Palestinian inhabitants and thus its Judaization.

We call on Israel, the occupying Power, to respect international law and the demands of the international community to stop this illegal practice. And, we recall, in this regard, the recent statement by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator, Maxwell Gaylard, who reaffirmed that "evictions of Palestinians from their homes and properties in Occupied Territory contravene international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and should cease".

Moreover, on Tuesday, 17 April 2012, a Palestinian man was seriously injured in the West Bank town of Al-Khalil (Hebron) after Jewish settlers invaded his home and assaulted him. He was rushed to the hospital with severe injuries. Such illegal actions by extremist Israeli settlers, which continue to intensify, are occurring in full view of the occupying forces, who continue to take no action to hold these settlers accountable and continue to provide them with impunity and protection while they are carrying out these crimes. We call on the international community to take urgent actions to end the unchecked rampage by settlers against the unprotected Palestinian civilian population throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East

Jerusalem, and to guarantee the protections of international humanitarian law to our people.

In addition to the above, it is also important to note that more than 1,500 activists from all over the world had planned to take part in the "Welcome to Palestine" peaceful campaign to participate in humanitarian and voluntary work activities, including, inter alia, helping to build a school in Bethlehem and work on some agricultural activities alongside Palestinian farmers. Unfortunately, more than 60 per cent of them were barred from attending, through the unexplained cancellation of airline tickets or the refusal by the occupying Power of entry into the Occupied Palestinian Territory upon arrival at the airport. Of those activists that were able to participate in non-violent protests and demonstrations affiliated with the "Welcome to Palestine" peaceful campaign against illegal Israeli policies and practices, many were subjected to aggression and violence by the Israeli occupying forces. This includes the barbaric assault against a Danish national, Andreas Ias, aged 20, who was assaulted in the face by a senior Israeli military commander with an M-16 rifle during a peaceful bicycle ride to demonstrate against the limited access to resources in the Jordan Valley.

Such intimidation and assaults by the occupying Power on pro-peace activists are clearly aimed at discouraging principled activists around the world from coming to the Occupied Palestinian Territory to express their solidarity with the Palestinian people and to call for respect for the principles of justice and freedom as well as international laws and norms. This abusive Israeli treatment of international peaceful activists requires redress by the international community, which should defend peace activists as well as the principles of international humanitarian law that they strive to defend by peaceful and non-violent means.

All of the pressing issues addressed in this letter constitute further confirmation of the dire situation that prevails in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, requiring the international community's urgent attention. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held responsible for all of its illegal and provocative actions. The international community, particularly the Security Council, cannot continue to stand idly by as the occupying Power perpetrates its criminal and inhumane treatment of Palestinian prisoners and detainees. Serious and timely efforts are needed to uphold the legal obligation to protect the Palestinian people under occupation, including the prisoners and detainees, to enforce the law and to salvage the chances of achieving peace and security.

This letter is in follow-up to our previous 423 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 9 April 2012 (A/ES-10/551-S/2012/202) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations